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ABSTRACT

The 1993 Parent Involvement Program Institute, a one-day parent conference, was held in May at Pace University under the sponsorship of the Office of Parent Involvement of the New York City Board of Education and Pace University. This institute combined various activities, including workshops, presentations, and displays of material on parent involvement. A selected number of Parent Involvement Program projects were showcased. More than 600 participants attended, including professional personnel, parents and children, and other interested individuals. Attendance was higher than in the preceding year, and the institute met its objectives. Participants rated the activities highly. It is recommended that the institute be held each year, and that it expand its activities and linguistically diversify its presentations. An exchange of information among the different parent-involvement programs is suggested. Three tables present some participant characteristics and responses. (SLD)

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ED 378 302

OER Report

EVALUATION OF THE 1993 PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM INSTITUTE APRIL 1994

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EVALUATION OF THE 1993
PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM INSTITUTE
APRIL 1994

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1993 Parent Involvement Program Institute was held on May 25th at Pace University, under the sponsorship of the Office of Parent Involvement (O.P.I.), in cooperation with Pace University. This institute, titled "Parents as Partners with Schools," was funded for a third consecutive year. It combined various kinds of activities, including workshops, presentations, and displays of materials on parent involvement. A selected number of Parent Involvement Program projects, designated as the most successful projects throughout the city, were showcased.

In the year under review by the Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.), the institute was attended by more than 600 participants, including O.P.I. staff, Pace University representatives, coordinators of Parent Involvement Programs (P.I.P.) at various school sites, parents and their children, and other interested individuals. Parents, in particular, had the opportunity to participate in all the activities organized by the coordinators.

As in the previous years, the institute met its objectives. The institute was well attended and once again had more attendees than the previous year. Moreover, all participants gave a highly favorable rating to all institute aspects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this evaluation, O.E.R. recommends that the Office of Parent Involvement:

- hold the institute each year;
- expand the length of workshop activities and linguistically diversify the workshops; and,
- provide written information from other PIP programs to all interested parties, so they can initiate, expand, and/or adopt the programs that parents see at the institute. Preferably, this information should be made accessible in parents' own first language.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been prepared by the Research Unit of the Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.) -- formally the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment. As with all other reports, it represents the contributions of many people.

Carolle Charles, Ph.D. coordinated the project and the development of this report. Pamela Wheaton collected the data and Belinda Wesley Rowe analyzed the data and wrote the final report. Supervision and editorial input from Mabel Payne, Research Unit Manager, were greatly appreciated.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

LIST OF TABLES iv

I. INTRODUCTION 1
PROGRAM BACKGROUND 1
EVALUATION OBJECTIVES 2
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY 3
SCOPE OF THIS REPORT 3

II. FINDINGS 4
CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS 4
SELECTED PROGRAM WORKSHOPS 4
PARTICIPANTS' INSTITUTE EVALUATION 8
SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE FUTURE INSTITUTES 11

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 12
CONCLUSIONS 12
RECOMMENDATIONS 12

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
Table 1	1993 PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS' STATUS	5
Table 2	RATINGS OF 1993 PIP INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES	9
Table 3	PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MOST USEFUL ASPECTS OF THE 1993 PARENT INVOLVEMENT INSTITUTE. .	10

I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In the Spring of 1993, the Office of Parent Involvement (O.P.I.) of the Board of Education of the City of New York, in cooperation with Pace University, sponsored an institute titled "Parents as Partners with Schools". This institute is an annual one-day parent conference which was established in 1990 by O.P.I. to showcase the most successful Parent Involvement Program projects throughout the city and to provide help and encouragement to parents who want to adopt, initiate, or expand the showcased institute projects in their schools and/or community school district. Individual projects are invited to participate at the institute.

O.P.I funded approximately 130 projects for the 1992-93 school year. Sites received funds in October, December, and February and were designated Cycle I, Cycle II, and Cycle III, respectively. Cycle I projects were a new initiative consisting of pairing previously funded programs (rated successful by O.P.I) with projects receiving initial funding during the 1992-93 school year, while Cycle II and Cycle III projects consisted of individual old and new projects. C.P.I required all Cycle I projects to be showcased, whereas Cycle II and Cycle III projects could volunteer to be showcased.

O.P.I invited the following groups and individuals to attend the PIP institute and view the showcased projects:

- five to ten parents from each participating project;

- all PIP project coordinators;
- members of the Chancellor's Presidents Advisory Council*;
- community school district superintendents, or their representatives;
- members of the Citywide Parent Leadership Group**;
- school system administrators, principals, and teachers; and,
- members of projects' Parent Advisory Councils***.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

As in previous years, O.E.R. was asked to evaluate the program. In order to determine the overall success of the institute, O.E.R. set the following evaluation objectives:

- to identify the role of institute participants (parents, PIP coordinators/staff, or other interested individuals);
- to detail the criteria used in the selection process of projects that participated in the showcase;
- to observe a selected number of programs that were presented;
- to indicate aspects of the institute that participants judged were most useful; and,
- to indicate the perceptions of the participants about the organization and benefits of the program.

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* The Chancellor's Presidents Council is a parent organization comprised of PTA/PA presidents from the 32 school districts, the five high school parent federations, the Citywide Special Education District, and the United Parent Association.

** The Citywide Parent Leadership Group is a parent organization comprised of representatives of parent groups throughout the city. This organization meets with the Chancellor several times a year to obtain information and share parents' perspectives on current education issues.

*** The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is a parent group that meets and advises the principal on Chapter 1 programs in place in a school. Federal laws require each school with a Chapter 1 program to have a PAC.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

To assess the success of the institute, evaluators from the O.E.R. (formerly the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment [OREA]), distributed a questionnaire exploring the participants' attitudes towards the institute, and observed several of the workshops being presented. From the summer of 1993 through the spring of 1994, O.E.R. evaluators tabulated questionnaire responses and prepared this report.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report consists of three chapters. Chapter I is an introduction detailing the Parent Involvement Program, the institute, and the evaluation objectives and methodology; Chapter II describes evaluators' findings; and Chapter III presents O.E.R.'s conclusion and recommendations.

II. FINDINGS

A total of 618 people attended the institute, which was held at Pace University on May 25 from 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Each participant received a registration form and a program of events. The institute opened with two choral presentations, followed by opening remarks by the Director of O.P.I, the Chairman of the Educational Administration Department at Pace University, and a parent from a special education project. Participants attended diverse workshops presented by project coordinators and parents from schools throughout the city.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Of the 618 individuals who attended the institute, 288 (46.6 percent) returned an evaluation questionnaire form to a member of the O.E.R. evaluation team. Of the 288 people who responded to the questionnaire, 203 were parents, 35 were PIP coordinators, 14 were PIP staff, 20 were principals and other personnel, and eight were "other". Table 1 shows the composition of participants who attended the institute.

SELECTED PROGRAM WORKSHOPS

A total of 40 projects were presented at the institute. All of the presenters spoke of their individual projects and offered suggestions and literature to all interested parties. The following programs were observed by an O.E.R. evaluator.

Public School 217--District 22

Public School 217 was a Cycle I program paired with a middle school (IS 240) and had received PIP funds for four years.

TABLE 1

1993 PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM INSTITUTE
PARTICIPANTS' STATUS
(N=288)

Participants' Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Parent	203	70.5
PIP Coordinator	35	12.2
PIP Staff	14	4.9
Principal/School Staff	20	6.9
Other	8	2.8
No Answer	8	2.8
Total Participants	288	100.1*

* Due to rounding errors, percentages do not total 100.

- Parents, the chief targets of the institute, represented the largest proportion of questionnaire respondents at the institute.

According to the presenters, they did outreach (via parent coordinators) to five target groups: Haitian, Latino, Chinese, Pakistani, and Russian parents. Each coordinator worked one morning a week on the phone contacting their specific parent population.

District Parent Liaison Pilot Project

The district parent liaison project was a pilot program initiated in 1992 by the Chancellor. The program involved eight districts and high school superintendencies. While all eight of the liaisons working in the project attended the institute, only four presented at the workshop. The presenters explained the vital roles parents have in the education of their children. They also said that their most important functions as a liaison were to increase parent participation throughout the school community and to help promote programs that foster good working relationships among parents, teachers, schools, and communities. In order to achieve these goals, liaisons assisted and trained Parent Association and Parent/Teacher Association members in understanding and working within the guidelines of New York City's public school system.

Walton High School

Walton High School was a second-year recipient of PIP funds. It was part of the Cycle I pairing program and was paired with IS 141. In this project workshops dealing with anger management were developed and facilitated by a certified social worker. She said that the workshops were designed to help parents and

adolescents deal more effectively with anger, and to give them insight and techniques which would enable them to deal with feelings and negotiate the parent/teenager relationship in a more constructive manner.

Community School District 18

According to the presenters, this particular project--"Playtime is Science"--was a first-year district-wide program that served five schools: PS 135, PS 219, PS 244, PS 268, and PS 272. The program was parent-initiated and designed to help children develop science skills in early grades using everyday experiences to make scientific discoveries. Children learned to use their curiosity, senses, and powers of observation to observe the world around them. This program involved parents and children in a hands-on discovery of science in their daily lives.

Public School 224 (District 75)

The Parent Involvement Program at Public School 224--"Parents in Partnership"--provided support services and joined the families of both special education and mainstream students from four Queens schools (PS 224, PS 213, PS 171 and PS 107). This project was a comprehensive family program that integrated special education children with the mainstream community by providing experiences that allowed parents, children, and teachers an opportunity to share ideas, problems, and thoughts. This program offered family swimming, physical education, multicultural activities, computer literacy, family outings, and

educational workshops. The "Parents in Partnership" project was recognized by New York State Education Department as the "Best Practice Model for Children with Emotional Disabilities."

PARTICIPANTS' INSTITUTE EVALUATION

On a closed-end question on the O.E.R. evaluation survey, participants were asked to rate the institute. The question specified six institute activities that were to be evaluated for their usefulness. Participants rated the activities along a 4-point scale, where 4 was defined as "very useful to them" and 1 was defined as "not useful to them."

As shown in Table 2, of the 288 evaluation forms completed and returned by the participants, the majority rated all six institute activities as being useful. Less than five percent of the respondents rated any of the aspects of the institute as not useful.

Another open-ended question on the evaluation survey asked the respondents to indicate the most useful aspects of the institute. As shown in Table 3, the three highest ranking categories were:

- networking and communicating with parents and others (29.5 percent of the respondents),
- sharing ideas, programs, and plans with others (14.6 percent of the respondents), and;
- institute workshops and specific topics addressed (13.5 percent of the respondents).

In addition, 69 percent of the respondents considered the institute's organization "excellent," and 73 percent of the

TABLE 2

RATINGS OF 1993 PIP INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES
(N = 288)

Activity	Not Useful < 1	2	3	Very Useful > 4	Not Applicable	No Response
Workshops	1.0%	2.5%	11.5%	68.8%	5.9%	10.3%
Content/Ideas Discussed	1.0%	2.1%	9.7%	67.4%	9.7%	10.0%
Materials Distributed	1.0%	3.5%	13.9%	59.4%	10.4%	11.8%
Networking with Other Program	4.2%	6.9%	18.4%	47.9%	9.4%	13.2%
Availability of Translation	3.8%	6.3%	8.7%	41.3%	26.0%	13.9%
Parent Presentations	1.4%	2.1%	15.3%	53.1%	15.6%	12.5%

- Less than five percent of the respondents rated any aspects of the institute "not useful."

TABLE 3

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MOST USEFUL ASPECTS OF THE 1993 PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM INSTITUTE (N=288)

Institute Aspects	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Networking/communication/ contacts with parents and others	85	29.5
Sharing ideas/programs/plans with others	42	14.6
Workshops and specific topics addressed	39	13.5
Learning parents rights/empowerments/ and services available	34	11.8
Others*	35	12.2
No response	53	18.4
All Aspects	288	100.0

* "Others" include special education workshops, parent liaison workshops, reading and literacy workshops, Spanish workshops, and hearing parents experiences. None of these categories received more than seven mentions.

- "Networking/communication/contacts with parents and others" was most frequently (29.5 percent) selected as the most useful aspect of the institute.

respondents reported they had ample opportunities to ask questions and present ideas.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE FUTURE INSTITUTES

Participants were asked to give suggestions for future institutes. Sixty-five percent of the respondents reported no need for any improvements at future institutes, or said that institute was fine as is. Many suggestions for improvement were positive ideas, such as requests to lengthen existing workshops and institutes (9.7 percent). Other constructive suggestions were to:

- offer more translation or more workshops in a second language (4.5 percent);
- publicize better and offer more information in advance (4.2 percent); and
- make information from all workshops available at a central location (4.5 percent).

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The Parent Involvement Program Institute was organized in order to encourage more parents to participate in the education of their own children and in the educational process in their neighborhood schools and school district. To achieve this goal, 618 parents, PIP coordinators and staff, and other interested individuals attended the Institute in May 1993 to hear about and respond to exemplary parent-centered initiatives in the New York City Public Schools.

Based on the results of participant responses to O.E.R.'s self-administered questionnaire, observations of program activities by O.E.R. evaluators, and the fact that there has been an increase in the number of participants attending the institute every year since its inception in 1990, the institute can be considered a success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing respondents' comments, ratings, and suggestions for institute improvement, O.E.R. recommends that the Office of Parent Involvement:

- hold the institute each year;
- expand the length of workshop activities and linguistically diversify the workshops; and,
- provide written information from other PIP programs to all interested parties, so they can initiate, expand, and/or adopt the programs that parents see at the institute. Preferably, this information should be made accessible in parents' own first language.